COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ASSURANCES

(2003-2004)

THIRTEENTH LOK SABHA

FOURTEENTH REPORT

(Request for Dropping of Assurances)

(Presented to Lok Sabha on 19.8.2003)

LOK SABHA SECRTARIAT
NEW DELHI

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COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ASSURANCES*
(2002-2003)

CHAIRMAN

Dr. S. Venugopal

MEMBERS

2. Shri E.Ahamed
3.** Shri Padam Sen Choudhry
4. Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi
5. Adv. Uttamrao Dhikale
6. Dr. S. Jagathrakshakan
7. Shri Brahma Nand Mandal
8. Shri Ramjee Manjhi
9. Shri E.M. Sudarsana Natchiappan
10 Shri Rupchand Pal
11. Shri Kishan Singh Sangwan
12. Shri Raghuraj Singh Shakya
13. Shri Bahadur Singh
14. Rajkumari Ratna Singh
15. Shri Tarlochan Singh Tur

SECRETARIAT

1.	Shri P.D.T. Achary	-	Additional Secretary
2.	Shri R.C. Gupta	-	Director
3.	Ms. J.C. Namchyo	-	Assistant Director

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* The Committee was nominated by the Speaker w.e.f. January 16, 2002 vide Para No.2528 of Lok Sabha Bulletin Part-II dated January 16, 2002

** Nominated to the Committee on August 12, 2002 by the Speaker as published vide Para No.3145 of Lok Sabha Bulletin Part-II dated August 12, 2002 vice Shri S.B.P.B.K. Satyanarayana Rao resigned.

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ASSURANCES*
(2003-2004)

CHAIRMAN

Dr. S. Venugopal

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3. Shri E.Ahamed
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9. Shri Rupchand Pal
10. Shri Dharam Raj Singh Patel
11. Shrimati Renu Kumari
12. Shri Kishan Singh Sangwan
13. Shri Bahadur Singh
14. Rajkumari Ratna Singh
15. Shri Tarlochan Singh Tur

SECRETARIAT

1.	Shri P.D.T. Achary	-	Additional Secretary
2.	Shri S.K. Sharma	-	Joint Secretary
3.	Shri R.C. Gupta	-	Director
4.	Ms. J.C. Namchyo	-	Under Secretary

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* The Committee was nominated by the Speaker w.e.f. January 25, 2003 *vide* Para No.3507 of Lok Sabha Bulletin Part-II dated January 28, 2003

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman of the Committee on Government Assurances, having been authorised by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Report of the Committee on Government Assurances.

The Committee (2003-2004) was constituted on January 25, 2003.

The Committee (2002-2003) at their sittings held on July 08, 2002 and October 01, 2002 *inter-alia* considered Memoranda Nos.16, 18, 19, 20, 21 & 22 containing requests received from the Ministries/Departments of the Government of India for dropping of pending assurances.

At their sitting held on August 06, 2003 the Committee (2003-2004) considered and adopted their Fourteenth Report. The Minutes of the aforesaid sittings of the Committee form part of this Report. (Appendix)

The conclusions/observations of the Committee are contained in this Report.

NEW DELHI;
August 06, 2003

DR. S. VENUGOPAL
Chairman
Committee on Government Assurances

REPORT

CHAPTER – I

(i) NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FORCE

1.1 On December 18, 2000, Shri Vinod Khanna, MP addressed the following Unstarred Question No.4379 to the Minister of Agriculture:-

> **"(a) whether the Government have any plan to create a National Emergency Management Force in the country for tackling manmade and natural calamities;**
>
> **(b) if so, the details thereof; and**
>
> **(c) the time by which the said force is likely to be created?"**

1.2 In reply, the then Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture (Shri Shripad Y. Naik) stated as follows:-

> **"(a) to (c): There is no proposal under consideration for creation of a National Emergency Management Force in the country for tackling manmade and natural calamities. However, there is a proposal to raise a Specialised Disaster Response Organisation (SDRO) with two units to be called Specialised Disaster Response Units (SDRUs) to augment/supplement the resources of the States and the nodal Ministries at the Centre by providing specialized resources in natural and man made disasters, which are unanticipated and need specialized response. This proposal is at a very initial and formative stage."**

1.3 The reply to the above question was treated as an assurance and was required to be fulfilled by the Ministry of Agriculture within three months of the date of the reply i.e. by March 17, 2001.

1.4 The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs vide their U.O. No.XIII-V/Agri(27)USQ4379-LS/2000 dated August 10, 2001 forwarded a request of the Ministry of Agriculture for dropping of the assurance on the following grounds:-

> **"The Government of India was considering a proposal for raising Specialised Disaster Response Organisation (SDRO) and Specialized Disaster Response Unit (SDRU) to augment/supplement the resources of the States and nodal Ministry at the Centre by providing specialised resources. In the meantime a High Powered Committee(HPC) was constituted for preparation of disaster management plans in August, 1999 inter-alia to recommend measures for strengthening organisational structures. The Committee is required to submit its final report by the end of September, 2001. In**

the context of earthquake in Gujarat of January 26, 2001, a National Committee on Disaster Management (NCDM) has been constituted in February, 2001 under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister having representations of the National and State level political parties. Shri Sharad Pawar is the Vice-Chairman of the Committee. The terms of reference of the Committee include suggesting necessary institutional and legislative measures needed for effective and long term strategy to deal with major natural calamities in future. The Committee has decided in its meeting to constitute a Working Group which in turn constitute Task Force with experts to recommend long term strategy to deal with major natural calamities in future. The Vice-Chairman of the National Committee has suggested that the HPC should be converted into Working Group to assist the National Committee. As such the shape and composition of the SDRO/SDRU will depend on the recommendations of the National Committee on Disaster Management. This process is going to take very long time.

Keeping in view the fact that no time limit can be fixed for raising/operation of the SDRO/SDRU the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs is requested to kindly apprise the position and request the Committee on Government Assurances to delete the above mentioned assurance from the list of Assurances."

1.5 The Committee note that a question was asked on December 18, 2000 to know whether the Government have any plan to create a National Emergency Management Force in the country for tackling manmade and natural calamities. The Government, however, denied to have any such proposal under its consideration. Instead, it was stated that a proposal to raise a Specialized Disaster Response Organisation (SDRO) with two units to be called Specialized Disaster Response Organisation Units (SDRUs) to augment/supplement the resources of the States and nodal Ministries at the Centre by providing specialized resources in natural and manmade disasters which are unanticipated and need specialized response, although at a very initial and formative stage, was under its consideration. It was, however, not elaborated when this idea was mooted by the Cabinet Secretariat.

1.6 Even though, a High Powered Committee (HPC) was constituted for preparation of disaster management plans in August 1999 itself for recommending *inter-alia* measures for strengthening organizational structures and to report by the end of September 2001, the same was not reported to the House by the Minister of Agriculture while replying to the question *ibid*. The reason for the same needs to be explained to the Committee. The Committee have been now informed that another Committee called National Committee on Disaster Management (NCDM) under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister having representatives of the National and State level political parties has been constituted in February 2001 as aftermath of Gujarat earthquake of January 26, 2001. While requesting for dropping of the

assurance, the Ministry of Agriculture have mentioned that the terms of reference of NCDM *inter-alia* include suggesting necessary institutional and legislative measures needed for effective and long term strategy to deal with major national calamities in future. It had also been reported that NCDM in its meeting decided to constitute a Working Group, which in turn, to constitute a Task Force with experts to recommend long terms strategy for dealing with major natural calamities in future. The Committee have also been apprised that the Vice-Chairman of NCDM has suggested that the HPC should be converted into Working Group to assist the NCDM and as such the shape and composition of the SDRO/SDRUs will depend on the recommendation of the National Committee on Disaster Management. As a result the whole process would take a very long time.

1.7 The request of the Ministry of Agriculture for dropping of the assurance was considered by the Committee at their sitting held on July 08, 2002 but was not acceded to. The Committee observe that the Government even after constituting two Committees, viz. HPC and NCDM in August 1999 and February 2001 respectively have not made much headway in achieving its goal i.e. creation of Specialized Disaster Response Organisation with Specialized Disaster Response Units. It is distressing to note that for a nation which is vulnerable to nature's fury in the guise of floods, droughts and earthquakes as also manmade disasters perennially do not have specialized force to tackle the situation even after several such incidents in the past. The Committees which were constituted in 1999 and 2001 are still struggling with formation of Working Group and Task Force. It is disheartening to note that the Government do not seem to be very serious as they have still to make up their mind as to whether to permit HPC to be converted into Working Group to assist the NCDM. In such a scenario, the Committee wonder when the NCDM actually would start functioning in real sense and give suggestions to the Government. It has usually been seen that whenever a disaster strikes, the subject matter comes into focus for some time and the Government complete the formality of constituting a Committee but unfortunately thereafter the matter is dumped in the cold storage till another disaster strikes.

1.8 The Committee, therefore, urge the Government that the fate of NCDM may also not become as that of other committees which are now lost in the pages of history. Keeping in view the long over due need of the country for a Specialized Disaster Force, the Committee strongly recommend that serious efforts should be made to help NCDM to complete its tasks by a specified time even if HPC has not been able to fulfill its terms of reference. Decision to convert HPC into Working Group of NCDM, if not done earlier, be taken expeditiously so that the idea of creating Specialized Disaster Response Organisation (SDRO) which the country really are in need of, may become reality at the earliest.

(ii) SETTING UP OF OIL RESERVOIRS

1.9 On March 15, 2001, Shri Jai Prakash, MP addressed the following Unstarred Question No.2712 to the Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas:-

> **"(a) whether the Government propose to set up strategic oil reservoirs in line with countries like America and Germany keeping in view the last year`s steep hike in oil prices in international market;**
>
> **(b) if so, the details thereof; and**
>
> **(c) if not, the reasons therefor?"**

1.10 In reply, the then Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR) stated as follows:-

> **"(a) Government is considering to provide strategic tankage for crude oil gradually in phases with a view to achieve a total of 45 days` cover.**
>
> **(b) & (c): The Ministry has received the Detailed Feasibility Reports for underground concrete storage tanks and underground rock caverns for the storage of crude oil. No final decision has been taken as yet."**

1.11 Reply to the above question was treated as an assurance and was required to be fulfilled by the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas within three months of the date of the reply i.e. by June 14, 2001.

1.12 The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs vide their U.O. No.XIII-VI/Petro Natural(5)USQ2712-LS/2001 dated March 22, 2002 forwarded a request of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas for dropping of the assurance on the following grounds:-

> **"The matter has been examined in detail in this Ministry. The process of examination of DFRs, selection of sites and finalisation of the actual project details after taking a decision *inter alia*, from military security point of view, is a long drawn out process and may take a considerable time to complete.**
>
> **Selection of Site requires elaborate consultation with the Ministry of Defence, since this would be at strategic locations. It is possible that a particular site may or may not be desirable even if it is feasible.**
>
> **After deciding to go ahead with the construction at any particular site, detailed project report (DPR) will have to be prepared which itself would take considerable time. Thereafter, the actual implementation of the project will take further time. Details may not be advisable to divulge from the point of view of security/strategic importance.**

Most importantly, deciding the means of financing the construction works will require detailed discussions with the Finance Ministry. There are other important issues viz., the recurring cost of carrying the stock, initial expenditure on acquisition of the desired stock and its replenishment at various points of time which would also require detailed consultation with Finance Department

In fact, the cost recovery aspect involves detailed policy deliberation, which may even require a legislative basis. If a recovery mechanism has to be firmed up through a statutory mechanism, the process of legislation itself will take some time.

Under the circumstances explained above, it appears that a finality to the issue of construction of strategic tankages will take long time and until then, the aforesaid assurance will keep pending. In view of this, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs is requested to place the matter before the Committee on Government Assurances for consideration to drop the aforesaid assurance."

1.13 On March 15, 2001, a question was asked as to know whether the Government had any proposal to set up strategic oil reservoirs in line with countries like America and Germany. The Committee note that the reply given by the Government was that it was considering to provide strategic tankage for crude oil gradually in phases with a view to achieve a total of 45 days' cover. The reply also mentioned that the Government had also received the Detailed Feasibility Reports (DFRs) for underground storage tanks and underground rock caverns for the storage of crude oil. But the final decision in this regard had not been taken.

1.14 While requesting for deletion of assurance, the Committee have been informed that the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas had examined the matter in detail. The Committee have also been informed that the process of examination of DFRs, selection of sites and finalization of the actual project details after taking a decision *inter-alia* from military security point of view is a long drawn out process and may take a considerable time to complete. Most importantly, deciding the means of financing the construction works, would also require detailed discussions with the Finance Ministry. Besides, there are other important issues which need detailed policy deliberation which may require a legislative basis.

1.15 The request of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to drop the above assurance was considered by the Committee at their sitting held on October 01, 2002 but it was not acceded to. The Committee note that as per the reply given on March 15, 2001, the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas had received DFRs for underground storage tanks and underground rock caverns for the storage of crude oil but at that time the final decision had not been taken thereon. It is surprising

that after one year, the Committee were informed that the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas had examined the matter in detail. They are constrained to note that the Ministry did not mention whether they have actually examined the DFRs and have taken a decision on it. Instead, the Committee are informed about the details of administrative, technical and legal procedures that would cause delay in implementing the assurance. The Committee are surprised that whereas the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas on one hand state that they have examined the matter in detail but on the other hand do not even mention whether they did accept or reject the DFRs submitted to them. Mere mentioning of the general procedures that are followed for commissioning a project would not suffice for dropping of the assurance. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas in the first instance, should apprise the Committee the date on which the Detailed Feasibility Reports (DFRs) were received by them and the date when they completed examination of DFRs in detail. The Committee would also like the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas to apprise them about the detailed action taken since examination of the DFRs, the outcome thereof together with the latest status of the case.

CHAPTER - II

(i) NATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY

2.1 On May 10, 1995, Shri Gopi Nath Gajapathi, MP addressed the following Unstarred Question No.5230 to the Prime Minister:-

"(a) the objectives of the National Renewable Energy Policy;

(b) the steps taken to implement the above policy;

(c) whether additional provision of funds has been made for the purpose; and

(d) if so, the funds earmarked therefor for the current plan period?

2.2 In reply, the then Minister of State in the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources (Shri S. Krishna Kumar) stated as follows:-

"(a): In order to realise the full potential of renewable energy sources by systematic and sustained measures, Government proposes to formulate a comprehensive renewable energy policy which help to create awareness, faster technology development and demonstration, accelerate commercialization.

(b),(c) & (d) : The policy is still in formulation. Only after its preparation and necessary approvals, details regarding provision/requirements of additional funds will be available."

2.3 Reply to Parts (b) to (d) of the question was treated as an assurance and was required to be fulfilled by the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources within three months of the date of reply i.e. August 9, 1995.

2.4 The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs *vide* their UO No. XIII-Non-Con.Sour.(2)USQ 5230-Lok Sabha/1995 dated April 17, 2002 forwarded a request of the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources for dropping of the assurance on the following grounds:-

"The Ministry has prepared a draft Renewable Energy Policy Statement for accelerated development of renewable sources of energy in the country. The draft of the Policy Statement was taken to the Cabinet for approval, and was discussed in the meeting held on 25th July, 2000. The Cabinet referred the draft Policy Statement to a Group of Ministers (GOM), headed by Minister of Human Resource Development, Science & Technology and Ocean Development. A meeting of GOM was held on 26th February, 2001. The matter is still under consideration of the GOM, and finalisation of the Policy

Statement is likely to get further delayed. The Ministry may, not be able to fulfill the above assurance, in the near future.

It is, therefore, requested that the Assurances relating to the Renewable Energy Policy may kindly be dropped."

2.5 On May 10,1995 a question was asked to know the objectives of the National Renewable Energy policy, the steps taken to implement it and the details as to whether additional funds has been made for the purpose along with the details of the funds earmarked for the then plan period. In reply it was stated that 'in order to realize the full potential of renewable energy sources by systematic and sustained measures, Government propose to formulate a comprehensive renewable energy policy which help to create awareness, faster technology development and demonstration, and also accelerate commercialization'. It was further stated that the policy was still being formulated and only after its preparation and necessary approvals, details regarding provision/requirements of additional funds would be available.

2.6 While requesting for dropping of the assurance, the Committee were informed that a draft renewable energy policy statement prepared by the Ministry was discussed by the Cabinet and it was referred to a Group of Ministers (GOM). The draft policy was still under the consideration of GOM and finalization of the policy statement was likely to get further delayed. The Committee note that an important issue of policy statement regarding renewable sources of energy in the country has been languishing for the last eight years. The Committee express their concern over the tardy progress made in the matter so far. Despite this fact, the Committee acceded to the request of the Ministry for dropping of the assurance during their sitting held on October 01, 2002. The Committee, however, recommend that the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources should pursue the matter vigorously and get the policy finalized and lay it on the Table of the House at the earliest.

(ii) IAS OFFICERS IN PRIVATE SECTOR

2.7 On November 29, 2000, Shrimati Hema Gamang, S/Shri Bhim Dahal and K.P. Singh Deo, MPs addressed the following Unstarred Question No.1689 to the Prime Minister:-

> **"(a) whether there is any proposal to depute IAS Officers in the private sector;**
>
> **(c) if so, the details thereof; and**
>
> **(c) the action taken by the Government in this regard?"**

2.8 In reply, the then Minister of State of Department of Personnel and Training and Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions (Smt. Vasundhara Raje) stated as follows:-

> **"(a) & (b): Government has received some suggestions, from certain quarters, for the deputation of IAS Officers to the private sector.**
>
> **(c): No decision has been taken in this regard."**

2.9 The reply to part (c) of the above question was treated as an assurance and was required to be fulfilled by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions within three months of the date of the reply i.e. by February 28, 2001.

2.10 The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs vide their U.O. No.XIII-V/PPG(4)USQ1689-LS dated September 12, 2001 forwarded a request of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions for dropping of the assurance on the following grounds:-

> **"While answering the above question, this Department has given the complete answer and it was not the intention of this Department to give any kind of assurance to the august House in the matter.**
>
> **This Question raised by the Hon'ble MP was about deputation of IAS Officers to private sector. As already answered, this Department has received suggestions from certain quarters to consider the feasibility of deputation of IAS Officers to the private sector. Since this is a major policy decision involving major ramifications for the administration of the service, the Government is studying the situation in various other countries like the UK, France, Canada and Australia. This is an exhaustive exercise and it will also be further required to examine the applicability of such trends in our present context. This exercise is likely to take considerable time.**

In view of the position mentioned above, it is requested that the matter may not be treated as an assurance. The Committee on Government Assurances may kindly be moved for deletion of the assurance."

2.11 The Committee note that on November 29, 2000 a question was asked about the proposal, if any, under the consideration of the Government regarding deputing of the IAS Officers to the private sector and the action taken thereon. In reply, the Government stated that it had received some suggestions from certain quarters for the deputation of IAS officers to the private sector but no decision had been taken in that regard.

2.12 The Committee do not subscribe to the view of the Ministry that the reply given to the question was not an assurance. The question sought to know about the action taken by the Government to which the latter had yet to take the decision. The Committee, however, acceded to the request of the Ministry to drop the assurance at their sitting held on July 08, 2002. The Committee, however, would like to be apprised about the action taken on the suggestions received by the Ministry for deputation of IAS Officers to the private sector as also initiatives taken to know the status of the study being made of the situation in other countries like UK, France, Canada Australia and the applicability of such trends in the present context.

(iii) CLEARANCE OF PENDING PROPOSALS OF FOREST DEPARTMENT

2.13 On December 11, 2000, Shri Prahlad Singh Patel, MP addressed the following Unstarred Question No. 3356 to the Minister of Environment and Forests:-

"(a) the number of proposals sent by the Forest Department, Madhya Pradesh to the Union Government from 1995 to 2000;

(b) if so, the details thereof proposal-wise and district-wise; and

(c) the details of proposals sanctioned, rejected and lying pending at present and the time by which these proposals are likely to be cleared?"

2.14 In reply, the Minister of Environment and Forests (Shri T.R. Baalu) stated as follows:-

"(a) to (c): 405 proposals have been received from Madhya Pradesh for forest clearance under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 during 1995 to 30.11.2000. As the detailed list of projects will be lengthy, a brief abstract of the information is furnished below.

1.	**Total number of proposals received**	**405**
2.	**Approved/sanctioned**	**251**

3.	**Rejected on merit**	**72**
4.	**Closed for non-receipt of information from State within stipulated time**	**23**
5.	**Proposals returned/withdrawn**	**7**
6.	**Proposals under process with Ministry**	**11**
7.	**Proposals pending with State Government for want of additional information**	**41**

As per above abstract only about 12% of the proposals are pending decision due to non-furnishing of additional/essential details by the State Government and hence the proposals are incomplete. These proposals can be processed only after the State furnishes the additional information sought."

2.15 The above reply was treated as an assurance as 11 proposals were under process with the Ministry of Environment & Forests. The assurance was required to be fulfilled within three months of the date of the reply i.e. by March 10, 2001.

2.16 The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs vide their U.O. No.XIII-V/Env.& For(13)USQ3356-LS/2000 dated April 22, 2002 forwarded a request of the Ministry of Environment & Forests for dropping of the above mentioned assurance on the following grounds:-

"that in the Ministry's reply, number of proposals mentioned at serial numbers 6 and 7 alongwith serial numbers 3, 4, & 5 are always in a state of flux/dynamics. The proposals keep on moving from one category to another. Even rejected/closed cases are reconsidered at the request of the State Governments. Moreover, in very exceptional circumstances the approval accorded to proposals earlier are also revoked. Therefore, this assurance is very difficult to be fulfilled in any given time frame.

In view of above, it is requested to kindly reconsider about the assurance."

2.17 A Question was asked on December 11, 2000 asking to know about the detail of proposals for forest clearance sent by the Government of Madhya Pradesh from 1995 to 2000. The question also sought to know about proposals which were pending with the Union Government for clearance. In reply, it was stated that 405 proposals for forest clearance under Forest Conservation Act, 1980 were received from the year 1995 to 2000. Out of these 251 were approved, 72 were rejected, 23

were closed, 7 were returned, 11 were under consideration and 41 were pending with State Government for want of additional information.

2.18 The Committee note that out of the 405 proposals received by the Government only 251 were approved and as many as 154 proposals were rejected/returned or pending with the State Government, whereas eleven proposals were under the consideration of the Government. The request of the Ministry of Environment and Forests for dropping of the assurance on the grounds that since the number of proposal returned/rejected/withdrawn etc. keep on changing and in very exceptional circumstances approval accorded to proposals earlier are also revoked, it is difficult to fulfill the assurance. Agreeing with the views of the Ministry, the Committee have agreed to drop this assurance at their sitting held on October 01, 2002. The Committee, however, desire that the Ministry should expedite finalization of proposals pending with the Government. The Committee also observe that as many as 23 proposals were closed for non-receipt of additional information from State Government and that major reasons for the rejection of the proposals are non-furnishing of information/additional information by the State Governments. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should issue a comprehensive list containing guidelines regarding information to be furnished, while submitting the proposals by the State Governments so that chances for rejection of the proposals for want of information could be avoided. Apart from this, the Committee also desire that the Ministry should have a fixed time limit for according approval/sanction of the proposals on the lines of time limit fixed for furnishing of the information by the State Governments.

(iv) DEFENCE COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA

2.19 On March 01, 2001, S/Shri K.P. Singh Deo, George Eden, Ganta Sreenivasa Rao and Shivaji Vithalrao Kamble, MPs addressed the following Unstarred Question No.1122 to the Minister of Defence:-

"(a) whether any specific agreement has been reached with Russia for purchase of T-90 tanks;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the expenditure involved therein;

(c) whether some Aircraft, including MI-17 helicopters are also proposed to be acquired from Russia;

(d) if so, the delivery schedule of the same and the terms and conditions laid down for their maintenance;

(e) whether the Government also propose to hire KH-22 Bomber, equipped with Missiles; and

(f) if so, the facts thereof?"

2.20 In reply, the Minister of Defence (Shri George Fernandes) stated as follows:-

"(a): Yes, Sir. A contract has been signed for procurement of T-90S tanks on 15th February, 2001.

(b):

(i) 310 T-90S tanks of which 124 numbers are in fully formed condition and 186 numbers in Semi Knocked Down/Completely Knocked Down form to be assembled in India, together with transfer of technology to take up production of the tanks in India.

The expenditure involved is as under:

(i) 124 numbers fully formed T-90 Tanks at a cost of Rs. 1401.2068 Crore.

(ii) 186 numbers of Semi Knocked Down and Completely Knocked Down tanks at a cost of Rs. 2225.9752 Crore.

(c) A contract for 40 numbers MI-17-IV helicopters was signed on 25th May, 2000 at a cost of 170 million US Dollars.

(d) The helicopters are being assembled in India and till date 16 helicopters have been handed over to the IAF. The delivery of all the helicopters will be completed by August, 2001. IAF personnel have been trained in Russia on systems not common with the existing fleet of MI-17 and the maintenance facilities for these new helicopters do exist with the IAF. A team of Russian specialists is available in India during the warranty period of one year to provide technical assistance, if required.

(e) & (f): The matter is under consideration."

2.21 Reply to parts (e) & (f) of the question was treated as an assurance and was required to be fulfilled by the Ministry of Defence within three months of the date of the reply i.e. by June 30, 2001.

2.22 The then Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Defence *vide* his D.O. No.1062/Dir(N)/2000/1444-F/RM dated May 31, 2001 requested the Chairman, Committee on Government Assurances for dropping of the assurance on the following grounds:-

"Parts (e) & (f) of the question *inter-alia* had sought information on a highly classified matter relating to an agreement signed between the Governments of India and the Russian Federation. Both sides are under obligation here not

to disclose the contents of the Agreement. In view of the above, I would request you kindly close the issue."

2.23 The request was placed before the Committee vide Memorandum No.30 on January 03, 2002 as also on January 15, 2002 but the Committee did not agree to drop the assurance.

2.24 The Minister of Defence vide his D.O. No.12(102)/2001/D(N-1)/DQ/2371-F/RM dated 20th May, 2002 again requested the Chairman, Committee on Government Assurances for dropping of the assurance on the following grounds:-

"The information sought in parts (e) and (f) of the question is highly sensitive in nature relating to an agreement between the Government of India and the Russian Federation. Both sides are under mutual obligation not to disclose the contents of this agreement. It would, therefore, not be appropriate for the Government of India to disclose the relevant information, which will be a violation of the provisions of the bilateral agreement with a foreign country. It was, accordingly, requested that the issue may be closed.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat *vide* OM No.12/1(13)/2001-2002-Q(CGA) dated February 28. 2002 stated that the request for closing the case was considered by the Committee on Government Assurances but was not agreed. Taking into consideration the sensitivity attached to this matter as also the Indian obligation under the agreement referred to above, may I once again request you to get the matter re-considered by the Committee on Government Assurances. I would be obliged if the decision taken in the matter by the Committee is conveyed to my Ministry at the earliest possible."

2.25 The Committee note that an assurance was given on March 01, 2001 in reply to a question asked whether any agreement had been reached with Russia for purchase of T-90 Tanks, Aircrafts, MI-17 Helicopters. It was also sought to know whether the Government propose to hire KH-22 Bomber equipped with Missiles. In reply, it was stated that a contract had been signed for procurement of T-90 Tanks on 15th February, 2001. It was also mentioned that a contract for 40 numbers MI-17 IV Helicopters was signed on May 25, 2000. As for hiring of KH-22 Bomber equipped with missiles, it was stated that the matter was under consideration.

2.26 In their request for dropping of the assurance, the Ministry of Defence pleaded that the matter was of sensitive nature and that both India and Russian Federation were under mutual obligation not to disclose the contents of the agreement between the two countries. The Committee, however, are surprised that this very fact could have been easily given while replying to the question instead of telling the House that 'the matter is under consideration'. Nevertheless, the Committee have acceded to the request of the Ministry for dropping of the assurance at their sitting held on October 01, 2002. The

Committee, however, strongly advise the Ministry to 'be cautious' while drafting the replies to questions to be given in the House.

NEW DELHI;
August 06, 2003

DR. S. VENUGOPAL
Chairman
Committee on Government Assurances

APPENDIX – I

MINUTES
FIFTH SITTING

Minutes of the Fifth sitting of the Committee on Government Assurances held on July 08, 2002 in Chairman's Room No.133, First Floor, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

The Committee met from 1500 hours to 1545 hours on Monday, July 08, 2002.

PRESENT

Dr. S. Venugopal - Chairman

MEMBERS

2. Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi
3. Shri Brahma Nand Mandal
4. Shri Sudarsana E.M. Natchiappan
5. Shri Ramjee Manjhi
6. Shri Rupchand Pal
7. Shri Kishan Singh Sangwan
8. Shri Bahadur Singh
9. Rajkumari Ratna Singh

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri R.C. Gupta, Director
2. Ms. J.C. Namchyo, Assistant Director

The Committee considered the following Memoranda regarding dropping of assurances:-

Memorandum No.13 **Request for dropping of assurances given in reply to various Starred/Unstarred Questions tabled from March 14, 1990 to December 06, 2000 regarding Legislation for Agriculture Labourers.**

The Committee considered the above mentioned Memorandum. After detailed consideration, they decided to await for the report of the Second National Commission on Labour. As such the request of the Ministry for dropping of the assurances was not acceded to.

Memorandum No.14 **Request for dropping of assurance given on May 07, 1992 in reply to Unstarred Question No.9357 regarding Non-Governmental Conferences.**

The Committee took up the above Memorandum for consideration and were of the view that letters to the five defaulting Ministries may be sent, in the first instance asking them to furnish the information sought by the Ministry of External Affairs within a month and if the requisite information is not sent to them, these Ministries will have to appear before the Committee for tendering Oral Evidence.

Memorandum No.15 **Request for dropping of assurances given on March 10, 2000 in reply to Unstarred Question No.2434 regarding Heavy Engineering Corporation.**

The Committee considered the above request of the Ministry but the assurance was not dropped. Instead the Committee desired that the matter may be taken up during the tour of the Committee to Patna etc.

Memorandum No.16 **Request for dropping of assurance given on November 29, 2000 in reply to Unstarred Question No.1689 regarding IAS Officers in private sector.**

The Committee considered the above mentioned Memorandum and decided to drop the assurance.

Memorandum No.17 **Request for dropping of assurance given on December 07, 1999 in reply to Unstarred Question No.1340 regarding Violation of Rights.**

The Committee considered the above mentioned Memorandum and decided not to drop the assurance. They desired to call the representatives of Ministries concerned to know the reasons as to why the information on such an important subject is not being maintained .

Memorandum No.18 **Request for dropping of assurance given on December 18, 2000 in reply to Unstarred Question No.4379 regarding National Emergency Management Force.**

The Committee considered the above mentioned Memorandum and decided not to drop the assurance.

The Committee then adjourned.

APPENDIX – II

MINUTES
NINTH SITTING

Minutes of the Ninth sitting of the Committee on Government Assurances held on October 01, 2002 in Chairman's Room (No.133), First floor, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

The Committee met from 1500 hours to 1600 hours on Tuesday, October 1, 2002.

PRESENT

Shri Brahma Nand Mandal - in the Chair

MEMBERS

2. Shri Padam Sen Choudhry
3. Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi
4. Shri Ramjee Manjhi
5. Shri Sudarsana E.M. Natchiappan
6. Shri Kishan Singh Sangwan
7. Shri Raghuraj Singh Shakya
8. Shri Bahadur Singh
9. Rajkumari Ratna Singh
10. Shri Tarlochan Singh Tur

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri R.C. Gupta, Director
2. Ms. J.C. Namchyo, Assistant Director

In the absence of the Chairman (Dr. S. Venugopal) Shri Brahma Nand Mandal, MP was chosen to Chair the sitting in terms of Rule 258(3) of the Rules of Procedure & Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha. Thereafter, the Committee took up the following Memoranda for dropping of the assurances in pursuance of the requests received from different Ministries:-

They, however, desired the Ministry to expedite finalization of proposals pending with the Government.

Memorandum No.19 **Request for dropping of assurance given on May 10, 1995 in reply to USQ No.5230 regarding National Renewable Energy Policy.**

The Committee decided to drop the assurance but desired that the Ministry should get the policy statement regarding National Renewable Energy finalized at the earliest and lay it on the Table of the House.

Memorandum No.20 **Request for dropping of assurance given on December 11, 2000 in reply to USQ No.3356 regarding Clearance to Pending proposals of Forest Department.**

The Committee agreed to drop the assurance. They, however, desired the Ministry to expedite finalization of proposals pending with the Government.

Memorandum No.21 **Request for dropping of assurance given on March 01, 2001 in reply to USQ No.1122 regarding Defence Cooperation with Russia.**

The Committee had already examined the above request at their sittings held on January 03, 2002 and January 15, 2002 but they had not agreed to drop the assurance. Having now fully satisfied with the reasons that divulging of information would be a violation of the provisions of the bilateral agreement with Russia, the Committee decided to drop the assurance.

Memorandum No.22 **Request for dropping of assurance given on March 15, 2001 in reply to Unstarred Question No.2712 regarding Setting up of Oil Reservoirs.**

The Committee decided not to drop the assurance since they were not convinced by the reasons advanced by the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Resources.

Memorandum No.23 **Request for dropping of assurance given on April 25, 2001 in reply to SQ No.550 regarding CVC Report on Defence Deals.**

The Committee were not satisfied by the reasons advanced by the Ministry for dropping of the assurance. They, however, decided to call the Officials of Ministry of Defence for Oral Evidence as to know the action taken by them on the recommendation made by the CVC on defence deals.

The Committee then adjourned.

APPENDIX – III

MINUTES
SIXTH SITTING

Minutes of the reconvened Sixth sitting of the Committee on Government Assurances held on August 06, 2003 in Chairman's Room. 133, First Floor, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi, which was postponed on August 4, 2003 for want of quorum.

The Committee met from 1500 hours to 1600 hours on Wednesday, August 06, 2003.

PRESENT

CHAIRMAN

Dr. S. Venugopal

MEMBERS

2. Shri Ramakant Angle
3. Adv. Uttamrao Dhikale
4. Shri Rupchand Pal
5. Shrimati Renu Kumari
6. Rajkumari Ratna Singh

SECRETARIAT

Shri R.C. Gupta - Director

2. At the outset, the Committee considered and adopted the draft fourteenth Report regarding dropping of assurances with slight amendments as under:-

Page	Para	Line	For	Read
5	1.7	8	In much hurry	Very serious

3. Thereafter the Committee decided to complete its unfinished tour and visit to Leh & Srinagar from September 16th to September 18th, 2003, which the Committee could not visit during its earlier study tour in the month of June, 2003, due to non-availability of flight from Chandigarh to Leh. The Committee also decided to undertake study tour to Bangalore, Chennai, Tirupati, Pondicherry, Kolkata & Guwahati from 06th October to 13th October, 2003

The Committee then adjourned.